



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

November 15, 2005

News Release

ICE JOINS VIRTUAL GLOBAL TASK FORCE AS U.S. REPRESENTATIVE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST ONLINE CHILD ABUSE

Global Industry Summit Addresses Problems and Risks of Child Abuse via the Internet

BELFAST, U.K. – John P. Clark, Acting Assistant Secretary for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), today announced ICE's role as a board member and the primary U.S. law enforcement representative to the Virtual Global Taskforce (VGT), an integrated network of law enforcement agencies from different nations created to combat online child abuse.

Mr. Clark's announcement came as he and other senior ICE officials participated in the first international summit of the VGT in Belfast, where law enforcement officials, non-governmental organizations, and private industry representatives from around the world gathered to share strategies in reducing online child abuse. Participants discussed the problems and risks of Internet child abuse; recognized model industry efforts to combat this problem; and developed new strategies to reduce the incidence of child abuse online.

Created in 2003, the VGT is a law enforcement-to-law enforcement network comprised of the Australian High-Tech Crime Centre; the United Kingdom's National Crime Squad, Canada's Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Department of Homeland Security's ICE and Interpol. The deputy director general of the United Kingdom's National Crime Squad is the current chair of the VGT, a position that rotates every two years between member law enforcement agencies. Supporting the VGT member agencies are non-governmental organizations and private industry representatives from member nations.

As a board member, ICE is working with other VGT representatives to implement a 24/7 online presence by law enforcement to combat child abuse. Under this system, one nation's member agency on the task force will essentially serve as the on-call, Internet police officer for the globe for a portion of each day. After the completion of one "shift," the responsibility will rotate to the next VGT member agency from another nation for the next shift that day. ICE will be working with other board members to facilitate access to the VGT website to ensure that any leads received during a "shift" can be reviewed and quickly forwarded to the correct member nation. Once implemented, this concept will truly create a virtual global task force.

As part of its board member duties, ICE is also responsible for bringing U.S. Internet providers, other American companies, as well as U.S. non-governmental organizations, into partnership with the VGT. In addition, ICE attends VGT meetings three times per year to approve new members, as well as to review new and modified initiatives of the task force.

“The VGT is an outstanding international effort to address online child abuse and one that ICE is deeply committed to,” said Acting Assistant Secretary John Clark. “With child sex predators moving seamlessly through the virtual borders of the world, cooperation between law enforcement agencies around the globe has never been more important.”

ICE’s participation in the VGT stems directly from ICE’s public safety mission as well its authority to investigate trans-border crimes. ICE has long-standing expertise in investigating cross-border crimes relating to child pornography and exploitation. Exemplary is ICE’s nationwide initiative called Operation Predator.

Through Operation Predator, ICE systematically targets Internet child pornographers, international child sex tourists, foreign national pedophiles, and human sex traffickers. This initiative draws on the full spectrum of ICE’s intelligence, investigative, cyber, and detention and removal functions to safeguard children against predators.

Since the launch of Operation Predator in June 2003, ICE has arrested more than 6,500 child sex predators nationwide. In addition, more than 1,000 predators have been arrested around the globe as a result of leads generated by ICE’s Operation Predator. Partnering with international law enforcement partners is a critical component of this initiative.

ICE

ICE, the primary investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security, was established to bring a unified focus to the enforcement of U.S. immigration and customs laws, with the principal goal of preventing violations by terrorists and other criminals who threaten the nation’s security.